

Wisdom and the Peaceful Mind

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By now, I presume it is clear to most of us as to what is meant by a **peaceful mind**. In these matters and in places like these, specially at International Conferences, when we select subjects like these as our themes for study and examination, whether in terms of theory or of practice, we must not forget the context in which we speak. A peaceful mind immediately implies **a state of mind which knows of no such state as peace** - a nagging wife to a husband or to a wife, a husband who comes home drunk every night and beats her up. A very gross, but a very real homely example.

At a very down to earth level, both may safely and we say justifiably, be eliminated without much injury to either party. It just has to be done, if for nothing else, at least in the interest of basic human rights. In the absence of such basic peace for the mind, both men and women, both young and old, very naturally end up in homes for mentally deranged. The seriousness of such situations may vary from person to person. Every one of us in society owes this to the other, not to rob any one of his or her legitimate right for peace. This is Buddhist thinking.

In the above examples, we stress the external factors which rob one's peace of mind. There is no over emphasizing the point if we say that both the rulers and the ruled in a country, i.e. the state and the people therein must take every step to reduce these to a minimum. But we have already indicated earlier and discussed how one's peace of mind is also robbed and stealthily or less stealthily taken away by one's own weakness and inability to adjust to situations in the world outside. This is essentially the human weakness. Buddhism does not pray to outside forces to stabilize this power within man.

We humans need wisdom to achieve this peace of mind. Wisdom here for the Buddhist is **one's acquired vision or awareness with regard to the realities of**

the world. It is this perfect adjustment to the world one lives in **which brings about total harmony within humans in relation to their life in the world**, both physical and mental. As Buddhists we believe that the Buddha himself acquired this highest wisdom with regard to both man and the world, at the very early age of thirty-five, here on earth and in this very life. Therefore we need to know what he has taught us on this subject.

According to Buddhism, the early genesis of this wisdom comes to man and woman **via the trust in the teachings of the Master** [*parato ghosa*]. It comes through listening to **an authentic transmission of the teaching** by one who is **competent in the Dhamma**. This trustworthiness has to be guaranteed. Mere hearsay in religious instruction can often be disastrous. That is why **falling back on the word of the Dhamma** is much more esteemed than reliance on persons, no matter what great claims people themselves can make to being authorities on the Dhamma. To this process of being fed externally is **to be added diligent analysis and examination by oneself**. This is referred to in other words as 'correct reflective thinking' [*yoniso manasikāro*].

Equipped initially with these two basic factors, both external and internal, one develops a new awareness, a new way of looking at life's problems. This is the beginning of a wisdom which is utilitarian. It leads to perfect harmony within and without, while one lives here and now. This is an unassailable poise in life, both for oneself and for the world in which one lives. Neither stand in conflict with the other. This wisdom finally leads to complete detachment from the living process in *Samsāra*. In Nirvana one has already achieved it.